July 20, 1896. - 2 M. - 11.75 - De La Mare.

LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

OF THE

Board of Home Missions and the Woman's Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Church,

156 FIFTH AVENUE, - - - - NEW YORK CITY.

BENITO:

A TRUE STORY.

THE new teacher was wending her way through the narrow streets and crooked lanes of the Mexican quarter.

Here and there the wind stirred the dust in fitful fashion, adding another shade of gray to the scanty grass and herbage on the Mission Hill. A small adobe church crowned the slope, and on one side was the school house, a long, low building, within the shadow of whose shady porch the teacher turned to look over the little town.

The scene was an odd one to her unaccustomed eyes; adobe houses in every stage of repair and decay. Some had grass grown roofs and tottering walls; others showed a recent application of clay. Down on the narrow street was a wild confusion of sight and sound. Two burros, passing in

opposite directions, with their double loads of wood had come to a standstill, and the sticks of the small boys, most vigorously applied, seemed to produce a harmonious flapping of the burros' long ears, and the cries and shouts of the children, blended with the deeper tones of the men who leaned against doorway and window. To the right lay the school and home of the padre. How bitterly he had opposed the work of her predecessor. How could she reach these people? Would her coming be in vain?

With heavy heart she watched the sun as it disappeared behind the mountains. Out beyond the town stretched softly undulating slopes, and then the hills, and beyond the hills the sunset glory like a glimpse of Heaven itself.

Oh! these children must be taught, she cried to herself. She could surely tell them that the gates were open for them; that neither priest nor padre stood upon the threshold, but One who, at the open door, said "come."

The sun was hardly above the hills when the teacher came again to the mission with José, the Mexican. That morning the earnest prayer had been, "Dear Lord, open to-day the door of some heart, and help me to enter for Thy sake." But just now the work which lay first was that school room. It had been for many months a shelter for dogs and burros; the dust lay thick on the few unbroken window panes, and the lizards, disturbed in their morning sun bath, went hurrying and

scurrying into the darkest corners. The teacher turned for comfort to José, who leaned against the door, looking with a contemplative smile at the scene before him.

"No good for the Señorita, for the burro better.' But the Señorita was by this time ready for the fray.

"José"—slowly and distinctly—"we make it better—clean"—with a gesture for illustration.

"Si, si, Señorita, mañana."

"No, José, not to-morrow, to-day."

José looked remonstrance at such unseemly haste, but the teacher was firm, and despatched him for water and "mucha jabon," plenty of soap.

Left to herself she scraped and blew the dust from a dilapidated bench, which leaned against the wall, and seating herself cautiously, proceeded to take a survey.

The floor was not bad, and when the windows were clean, the room would be full of sunshine. The organ should stand there and the bookshelves —but here the side-door creaked dismally, and opened just enough to admit the head of somebody, who, evidently encouraged by the look which greeted the visitor, gave the long-suffering door another push, and—down they came together, with a crash, while an apologetic voice exclaimed: "Malo, malo, what I haf done!"

In a second, as the cloud of dust cleared away, the intruder, a bright-looking boy of sixteen, scrambled up from the floor exclaiming, apologizing, and introducing himself in a breath:

"I hafe learn Ingles, Señorita, I talk with Americanos more as—any," with a sweeping and exclusive gesture, which left him master of the field.

The teacher was duly impressed by this display of learning, and ventured to inquire the name of so distinguished a person. "Benito Armijo."

"And where do you live, Benito?"

"Clozeby," pointing through one of the dusty windows to a dilapidated adobe across the alley.

"With Petra there, I lif, Petra, sister of me."

A sudden thought struck the teacher.

"Does Petra know the English also?"

"Petra?" with a superior air, "No, Señorita, no Petra, only Benito." "Vete!"—this to the burro whose long ears appeared at the door.

"Petra," returning to the subject, "Petra haf not learned of me." The teacher was not surprised.

Benito proceeded to explain that Petra was, alas!—"poco stupido," and would not also study the "Ingles" as he, Benito.

But the teacher unfolded her plans, and by the time José returned with the water, Benito had promised that Petra should come to the school, and learn of the teacher, "Ingles."

And so the school began. Day by day new names were added to the roll. At first only Petra and Josephita repeated, after the teacher, the words of the morning prayer. But the walls of the school-room were bright with pictures, and the music of the teacher's voice, as she sang, "The sweet Story of Old," drew the children in spite of the indiffer-

ence of the parents, and the padre's threats.

Benito continued to extend patronage and protection, watched Petra carefully, and came sometimes to introduce "another who will come also to the school."

Sometimes Petra's slate would show some firmer strokes besides her own wavering lines, and the little one would nod emphatically when the teacher asked, "Hermano?"

Finally, one morning, Benito appeared at the door, just before the morning prayer, and, walking up to the teacher's desk, announced, with an air of decision, "I haf come myself to the school."

The teacher had been praying and waiting for this; she was not surprised, but Petra's round eyes were full of astonishment, and it was evident that the school received added dignity from Benito's presence.

His advent marked a new era. More of the older ones came now, and "The Arithmetic" and "The Geog." were diligently studied, Petra, especially, becoming a model of industry.

But no part of the day did Benito love more than the precious morning hour, when the teacher read, with the children, of Jesus, the loving Friend, to whom they might go every day with their joys and sorrows.

The name was not new to the children; was it not He who stood above the church door, and to whom the Padre said they must give money or He would be angry with them? And when Benito's

mother was ill, did he not give all the grape-money to the priest, that the Blessed Mother might be persuaded to intercede with Jesus? But she could not persuade Him to make the madre well, and Benito had said he would never again give anything to the Virgin.

But this Jesus to whom the teacher prayed, and of whom she read in the little book, which the padre said was not for them—this Jesus was not the wooden Jesus over the church door.

This Jesus had healed the poor people who came to Him, and asked of them nothing. Surely, He was good.

Months passed, and the teacher watched and prayed, until one gray morning as she stood, at the recess-hour, looking out to the misty mountains, some one came and stood beside her with an open book, pointing to the words they had sung that morning:

"There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified;
Who died and loved us all.

Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we should love Him too.

And then as she looked up, questioningly, Benito's dark eyes filled with tears, and he said, earnestly.

"Teacher, I *haf* love Him—"

The mist still held the mountains in gray em-

brace but, oh, the sunshine in the teacher's heart as she thanked God that, for Benito, the gates beyond the mountains would never be closed.

Years have passed, bringing many changes to the school on Mission Hill. Could you visit her to-day, the teacher would tell you in answer to your questions:

"Yes, Petra is with us still, almost a young woman now. In the boarding-school, and such a comfort."

"Benito? Ah! Benito is gold. He is an elder in our church, you know."

A representative of the Woman's Executive Committee was pleading the cause of Home Missions in the Southwest. After the meeting, a Mexican came forward and expressed much gratification at meeting the lady because of great personal benefits received.

As he was a total stranger, the lady disclaimed the proffered gratitude, saying: "I have never met you, or benefited you in any way."

"But," replied he, "you represent the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions, and all I am I owe to that association, for I am Benito!'

PRICE ONE CENT.

No. 7—2d Ed.—7, 1896.

Home Mission Monthly

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMAN'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF HOME MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Contains Interesting Items, Fresh Facts, and Helpful Programmes on the Regular Topics.

PRICE, 50c. PER YEAR; 5c. PER SINGLE COPY.

Address

MISS S. F. LINCOLN,

156 Fifth Ave., New York City.